

THE BESWICKE-ROYDS MASONIC MS. OF THE OLD CHARGES.

An exact Typographical Reproduction with a short Description.

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It is interesting to record the discovery of still another copy of the "Old Charges," which brings the number of known written versions up to seventy-five, exclusive of the two "Crane" and the "Wren" MSS. which have disappeared in recent years.

The latest find has been named after the late Bro. C. R. N. Beswicke-Royds, P.G.D., for many years Deputy Provincial Grand Master of East Lancashire, amongst whose effects it was found after his decease. His Masonic legatee and executor, Bro. F. N. Molesworth, P.Prov.G.Reg., East Lancs., tells me that the MS. was presented to its late owner by a London friend over thirty years ago, but he, unfortunately, can throw no further light on its antecedents.

The document consists of four pieces of parchment, for the most part about six inches wide (the maximum width being six and one-sixteenth inches and the minimum five and three-quarter inches), stitched together to form a continuous strip six feet ten inches long over all, rolled up in the usual way. The scroll has originally been tied up with a piece of ribbon or tape, folded in the middle and sewn to the centre of the top of the MS., the tab of which still remains. The first sheet measures twenty-three and one-half inches, lapped *over* the second, the second twenty-four and one-half inches lapped *under* the third, the third twenty-three and one-half inches lapped *over* the fourth, and the fourth eleven and one-quarter inches; the difference between the sum of the separate lengths and the total being, of course, accounted for by the over-lapping of the sheets. A piece has been torn off the bottom right-hand corner of the roll but, fortunately, in such a way as not to interfere with the writing.

The parchment is much discoloured from age and frequent handling, but the writing is perfect and quite legible, with the exception of a few words obliterated by stains (reproduced in italics in the transcript) and a single word in line eleven (reproduced in italics in brackets) where a crack appears.

I was inclined to date the period of writing at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, as were also several antiquarian friends whom I consulted, but Bro. Thorp, of Leicester, who has kindly checked and corrected my transcript, says he would hesitate to date it earlier than the second half of that century.

The places where the scribe has started his labours afresh with a new or sharpened quill are easily discernible and occur at the beginnings of lines 51, 97, 156 and 291 and the fourth word in line 132.

That the clerk copied from a pre-existing document is perfectly evident from the many errors easily traced, some words being omitted and others duplicated, and so the value of this version is diminished in comparison with others. The spellings are peculiar and varied and the indiscriminate use of the letters u and v seems to follow no rule, unless we regard their frequent, though not universal contrary use, as having been the guide of the writer.

So far as classification is concerned, Bro. Thorp writes:—

Subjecting it to the tests established by the late Bro. W. J. Hughan and Bro. Dr. Begemann, I think it should be added to the SLOANE Family and to the *Sloane* Branch of the family, with the number E 21. In the most important points it is in general agreement with the Sloane MS. No. 3848, although there are some curious and uncommon discrepancies. Thus the wages paid by St. Alban are said to have been "every three weeks III^s VI^d their double wages," the first three words being most unusual. Again in the first charge reference is made to the "teaching of indiscreet men," in place of the usual word "discreet," an error also found in the Strachan and Scarborough MSS. In the sixteenth charge there is a curious error—it reads "Also that no mason make moulds sware etc.," instead of "square."

According to the late Bro. Gould's tests of evidential value from a legal standpoint it easily falls into Group III. of his classification.

THE TRANSCRIPT.

The might of the father of heauen wth
the wisdom of his glorious Sonne
through the goodnes of the holy Ghost that
bee three psons and one god bee wth vs bee
wth us att our begin'ng & giue vs grace
so to governe vs in or Livinge that wee may
come to his blisse that neuer shall haue
endinge

- Good brethren & fellowes our purpose is to tell you
- [10.] howe & in what manner this Craft of masoury
was begun & afterwards founded by worthy (*kings*)
& princes and many other wor^{ll} men & alfo to them
that bee here wee will declare the charge that doth
belonge to euery true Mason to keepe for in good
faith if you take heed therevnto jt is well worthy to
bee kept for a worthy Craft & Curious science for there
bee seaven liberall sciences of the wch this is one viz
the first is gramer that teacheth a man to *speake*
truly and write truly the seacond is rhetorick *which*
- [20.] teacheth a man to speake faire and in subtile *termes*
the third is Logicke that teacheth to discerne truth
from falshood, the fourth is Arithmetick that teach
eth to account and recount all manner of numbs the

- fift is called Geometry and teacheth meat & measure of the earth & cther things of wch science is *masonry*. The sixt is musicke wch teacheth songe & voice of tonge organs & harpe the VIIth is called Astronomy that teacheth to knowe the Course of the sunne moone & othr ornamts of the heavens The wch seaven liberall
- [30.] scienc's bee as it were all one science that is to say Geometry for thus may a man proue that all the scienc's in the world bee found by Geometry for it teach eth meat & measure ponderacon & weight of all maner of kynd & earth and there is no man that worketh by any craft but hee worketh by some measure and no man buyes or sells but by measure & weight and all is Geome^{try} And Craftsmen & merchants fynd no other of the VII scienc's espetially plowe-men & tillers of graine both corne seeds vynes plants & sellers of all other fruits, for *Gram^r*
- [40.] neither Astronomy nor any of these can fynd a man one measure or meat wthout Geometry wherefore I thinke that science most worthy that fyndeth all others Howe this worthy Science was first begun I shall tell you. Before Noah's flood there was a man called Lameth as it is written in the fourth Chapter of genesis and this Lamech had twoe wyues the one was called Ada, and the othr sella and by the first wyfe Ada he begott twoe sonnes the one was called Jabell & the other Juball and by the othr wyfe hee had one sonne
- [50.] & a daughter And these 4 children found the begininge of all crafts in the world: This Jaball was the elder sonne and hee found the Craft of Geometry and hee separated flocks of sheepe and lambs in the field and hee first wrought an house of stone and Tree as it is noted in the Chaptr abouesd. And his Brother Juball found musick of songe harpe and organs and the third brothr Tuballcain found smiths craft as of iron & steele & their Sister found out weavinge And these children did know that God would take vengeance for finne either by fire
- [60.] or water wherefore they writt these scienc's wch were found in twoe pillars of Stone that they might bee found at after the flood. The one ftone was called marble that cannot burne wth fire The othr was called Lateras that cannot drowne wth watr. Our Intent is now to tell you truly howe & in what manner these stones were found whereon these Crafts were written The Greek Hermenes that was sonne vnto Cus and Cus was sonne vnto Sem who was sonne vnto Noah This same Herme nes was afterwards called Hermes the father of wise men
- [70.] and hee found out the twoe pillers of stone wherein the scienc's were written and taught them forth And at the

- makinge of the Tower Babilon there was the Craft of masonry then first found & made much of and the kinge of Babilon who was called Hembroth or Nembroth was a mason and loved well the Craft as it is said wth the mnr of the stories And when the Citty of Ninivy & othr Citties of East Asia should bee made The kinge of Babilon sent thither sixty masons att the desire of the kinge of Ninivy his Cozen and they went forth and hee gaue them
- [80.] a charge in this manner, That they should bee true & loue truly togeathr and that they should serue their lord truly for their paymt so that hee might haue wor'p for sendinge them and othr charges hee gaue them And this was the first tyme That any Mason had any Charge in this Craft. Moreouer when Abraham & sara his wyfe went into Egipt hee there taught the seaven scyences vnto the Egiptians and hee had a worthy scholler called Euclid and hee learned right well and was mafter of all the VII sciences. And it befell in his dayes That the
- [90.] lords and states of this Realme had so many sonnes that they had begotten some by their wyues and some by ladies of the realme' for that land is an hott land & plenteous generacon and they had no Competent living for their children wherefore they made much sorrowe And the kinge of that land called a great Counsell & a pliamt to knowe howe they might fynd *there children*

- meanes and they could fynd no good wayes Then hee caused a Cry to bee made throughout the Realme That if there were any man that could informe him that hee
- [100.] should come vnto him and hee should bee well rewarded and hould himselfe well paid, And after this Crye was made, this worthy Clarke Euclid came and said to the kinge and all his great Lords If you will haue yor children gouerned & taught honestly as gentlemen should bee vnder Condison that you will grant them & mee a Comifision that I may haue power to rule them honestly as those sciens ought to bee ruled And the kinge wth his Counsell granted them & sealed that Comifision And then the worthy docter tooke the Lords
- [110.] sonnes and taught them the science of Geometry in practice to worke masonry and all manner of worthy workes that belonged to building of Castles & all maner of Courts Temples Churchs wth all other buildings & hee gaue them a charge in this manner first that they should bee true vnto the kinge and vnto the lord they serued and that they should loue well togethr and bee true one to anothr and that they should call one & other fellowes & not servant or knaue nor othr foule

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

- names and that they should truly serue for their paymt^t
- [120.] the lord they serued And that they should ordeyne the wisest of the Company to be maister of the lords worke & that neither for loue great livinge nor riches to sett an othr that hath litle Cuning to bee maister of the lords work whereby hee should bee evill serued and they ashamed & that the should call the Gouvernor of the worke maister of the worke whyles they worke wth him & many other things that are to longe to tell & to all these Charges hee made them sweare the great Oath that men vsed at that tyme & ordeyned for them reasonablen paymt that they
- [130.] might liue by honeftly and also that they should come and assemble wth others that hee might haue counsell in their Craft and might worke best to serue their Lord for his profit and wrp and to correct themselues if they haue trespassed and thus the Craft of Geometry was gouerned there And that worthy mr gaue it the name of Geometry; vnder wch is conteyned Masonry. Longe after the Children of Israel came into the land of Behest wch nowe is called amongst vs is called Jerusalem kinge Dauid began the temple
- [140.] of Jerusalem called wth them Templu' Domini And the same kinge Dauid loued Masons well & cherished them and gaue them paymt And hee gaue them charges as you shall here afterwards. And after the decease of Kinge David Solomon that was sonne vnto Dauid pformed out the Temple his father had begun and hee sent after Masons into dyvers lands and gathered them together so that hee had foure score thousand workers of stone and they were named Masons and hee had three thousand of them wch were ordeyned maisters & governors of that worke And there was a kinge of another Region
- [150.] that men called Hiram and hee loved well kinge Solomon & gaue him timber for his worke and hee had a Sonne that was named Aynon and hee was mr of Geometry and hee was chiefe mr of of all his masons and mr of all his Graveinge works & of all othr masons that belonged to the Temple and this witneseth the Byble in libro Regn IIII^{to} capite 177. And this sonne Solomon confirmed both charges & manners wch his father had given to masons and thus was the worthy craft of masons confirmed in the Cuntry of Jerusalem and in many othr kingdomes glorious craftsmen walkinge abroad into
- [160.] dyuers Cuntries some because of learninge more craft & other some to teach their craft. And so it befell yt a curious mason named Naymus Graecus who had bene at the makinge of Solomons Temple came into france & there taught the Craft of masonry to the men of France. And then there was one of the royall blood of france called Charles Martell & .

- hee loued well this Craft and hee drewe to him this
 Naymus Graecus & learned of him the Craft & tooke
 upon him the Charges & manners & afterwards by the
 [170.] grace of God hee was elected kinge of france &
 when hee was in his state hee tooke to him many
 masons and made mafons there that were none
 before and sett them on worke & gaue them charges &
 manners & good paymt wch hee had learned of other
 masons & hee confirmed them a Charter from yeare
 to yeare to hould an afsembly & thus came the Craft of
 masonry into ffrance. England all this season stood
 void both of any Charge & Masonry vntill the tyme
 of St. Albcn and in his tyme the kinge of England yt
 [180.] was a pagan and hee walled the Towne wch is now
 called St Albons and so in Albons tyme a worthy
 knight was chiefe steward to the kinge & had gount
 of the Realme & alfo of makinge the towne walls & hee
 loued masons well & cherished them & made their paymt
 right good standinge wages as the Realme did require
 for hee gaue them euery three weeks III^s VI^d their double
 wages whereas before that tyme through all the whole
 land a mason tooke but a peny a day till the tyme that
 St Albion mended it and gott them a charter of the kinge
 [190.] and his Counsell and gaue it the name of an Afsembly
 & was thereat himselfe & made masons & gaue them
 charges as you shall here hereafter. But after the death of
 St Albion there came great wars in England through
 dyuers nations so that the good Rule of masonry was de
 stroyed till the tyme of kinge Athelston who was a
 worthy kinge in England and hee brought the land into
 good rest & peace againe & hee builded many great
 works of Castles Abbies & many other Buildings

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- and many othr Buildings and hee loued masons very
 [200.] well and he had a sonne that was named Hedwine
 and hee loued masons much more than his father for hee
 was full of the practice of Geometry wherefore hee
 drewe himselfe to comune wth masons & to learne of
 them the Craft & afterwards for loue hee had to masons
 & the craft hee was made mason himselfe & hee gott of
 his father the kinge a Charter & a Comifision to hould euer
 yeare an Afsembly where they would within the realme &
 to correct wthin themselues by statute Trespafses if they
 were done wthin the Craft. And hee held himselfe an
 [210.] afsembly at york & there hee made masons & gaue them
 charges and taught them the manners of masons and
 comanded that Rule to bee houlden euer after and to him
 he betooke the Charter & Comifision to keepe & ordeyned

[220.] That it should bee ruled from kinge to kinge. when the
Assembly was gathered togethr hee caused a Cry to bee
made that all masons both ould & yonge That had any
writings or vnderstanding of the Charges that were made
before either in this land or any othr that they should
shewe them forth and there was some in french some
in Greeke & some in Englishe and some in othr langages
and the Intent thereof was found, and thereof hee com
mandded a booke to bee made, how the Craft was first
found & made, and Comanded that it should bee read
& tould when any maion should bee made & to giue them
the charge and from tyme till this masonry hath
beene kept in that forme and order as well as men
might Gouverne the same, And furthermore at dyvers
assemblies hath beene putt to and added certaine charges
more by the best aduice of maisters & fellowes

[230.] here followeth the worthy &
godly oath of masons (vizt)

Euery man that is a mason take heed right well
of this charge if you fynd yo^r selfe guilty of any of
these that you may amend you againe espetially yo^r
that are to bee charged take good heed that you may
keepe this Charge for it is a great prill for a man to
forswear himselfe vpon a Booke.

- [240.] 1 The first charge is that you shall bee true man
to God and holy church, and that you vse no heresie
or error by your vnderstandinge or by teachinge of
indiscreet men.
- 2 Also you shall bee true liegemen to the kinge without
treason or fallshood and that you knowe no treason
but that you amend it if you may or ells warne the
kinge or his Counfell thereof.
- 3 Also you shall be true one to another, that is to say
to euery mr & fellowe of the Craft of masonry that
bee mafons allowed & that you doe to them as you
would they should doe to you.
- [250.] 4 And also that euer mason keepe Counsell of lodge
and chamber truly & all othr Counsell that ought to
bee kept by the way of masonry.
- 5 Also that no mason bee thiefe in Company so farr
forth as yo^w shall knowe.
- 6 And also that you shall bee true vnto the lord & mr
that you ferue & truly to see for his profit & advantage
- 7 Also that you doe no villany in that house whereby
the Craft may be slandered.

[260.] These bee the Charges in Gen'all wch euery
 mason should hould both maisters & fellowes
 Now followe other Charges in pticuler for
 maisters & fellowes.

- 1 first that no mr take vpon him any lords worke
 nor other worke butt that hee knowe himselfe able of
 Cuninge to pforme the same so that the Craft haue no
 disworship but that the lord may bee ferued truly.
- 2 Also that no mr take any worke but that hee take
 it reasonably so that the lord may be truly serued
 wth his owne goods & the mr liue honestly & truly pay
 his fellowes their pay as the manner of the Craft
 doth require.
- 3 Also that no mr nor fellowe supplant other of their
 worke (that is to say) if they haue taken a worke or
 stand mr of a lord's worke you shall not putt him
 out vnles hee bee unable of Cunning to end the worke
- 4 Also that no mr or fellowe take any prentice to bee
 allowed his aprentice but for seaven years and that
 the apprentice bee able of birth & limms as hee ought
 to bee.
- [280.] 5 Also that no mr nor fellowe take allowance to bee
 made mafon without the assent of his fellowes at
 the leaft fyve or six.
- 6 And also that hee that is to bee made masons bee
 free borne of good kinred & no bondman & that hee
 haue his right lims as a man ought to haue.
- 7 Also that no mr putt a lords worke to taske that
 was vsed to goe to journey.
- 8 Also that euery mason giue pay to his fellowes *but*
 as hee may deserue so that hee bee not deseaued
 by false workmen.

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- 9 Also that no fellowe slandr anothr falsly behind
 his backe to make him loose his good name or his
 worldly goods.
 - 10 Also that no fellowe wthin the lodg or without answer
 another vngodly without reasonable cause.
 - 11 Also that euery mason preferr his elder & putt him
 to worship.
 - 12 Also that no mason shall play at cards hazards or
 any othr vnlawⁿ game wherby they may bee slaudered.

- [300.] 13 Also that no mason comitt Ribaldry or leachery to make the Craft slandered & that no fellowe goe into the towne where there is a lodge of masons without a fellowe to bear him witnes that hee was in honest Company.
- 14 Also that euer mr & fellowe come to the Afsembly if hee bee wthin fifty myles & hee haue warninge & to stand to the award of maisters and fellowes.
- 15 Also that euery mr & fellowe if hee haue trespassed shall stand to the award of mrs & fellowes to make them accord & if they cannot to goe to the Comon lawe.
- [310.] 16 Also that no mason make moulds sware or rule to any rough layers.
- 17 Also that no mason sett layers wthin a lodge or without to haue mould ftones wth moulde of his owne makinge.
- 18 Also that euery mason shall receave and cherish strang masons when they come ouer the Cuntry & sett them on worke as the manner is (that is to say) if they haue mould ftones in place hee shall sett him a fortnight on worke at the least & giue him his hyre & if there bee no stones for him then to refresh him wth some money to bringe him to the next lodge, and also eu'y euery mason shall serue truly the workes and truly make an end of the worke bee it taske or Journey if hee haue his pay as he ought to haue.
- [320.]

These charges that are here rehearsed and all other that belonge to masonry you shall truly keepe to the vttermost of yo^r knowledge

So helpe you God and by
the Contents of this Book

[329.]

